

UDC 82.0

<https://doi.org/10.59849/0002-3078.2025.1-2.36>

NATIONAL IDENTITY AND THE MORAL CRISIS IN FORD MADOX FORD'S THE GOOD SOLDIER AND PARADE'S END

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(Presented by Academician of ANAS I.A.Habibbeyli)

Ford Madox Ford (1873–1939) is regarded as one of the prominent representatives of modernist literature. His fiction is not limited to aesthetic experimentation but is also enriched with profound observations on the system of national identity and values in England. In particular, The Good Soldier (1915) and Parade's End (1924–1928) are presented as literary expressions of the political, social, and moral crises that occurred in English society during the First World War. In The Good Soldier, the author employs the technique of the unreliable narrator to portray the collapse of personal relationships; the disintegration of values such as family, friendship, and loyalty becomes part of a broader national identity crisis. The novel's fragmented narrative structure reflects both individual and social breakdown, directing the reader to comprehend the complexity of national identification. The Parade's End tetralogy offers a larger historical and social panorama. Its protagonist, Christopher Tietjens, is portrayed as a symbol of "late Victorian" values, but war, the transition to the modern world, and the transformation of social structures put his identity and ideals to a severe test. In this series, Ford depicts not only the institutional crisis of society but also the confrontation of individual identity with modernity. The article analyzes Ford's concept of national identification through the lens of modernist aesthetics. His understanding of fragmented time, the central role of memory in narrative, and the principle of polyphony open up new horizons in representing English national identity. Thus, Ford Madox Ford is evaluated not only as the creator of modernist narrative techniques but also as a writer who introduced an original perspective on issues of national identity.

Keywords: modernism, national identity, First World War, Victorian values, English literature

Introduction

Ford Madox Ford (1873–1939) is one of the writers who stands at the crossroads of national identity and modernism in twentieth-century literature. He was not only a novelist but also a literary critic and editor, playing an important role in shaping the English modernist canon [1]. As the founding editor of The English Review, Ford created a platform that introduced and promoted many modernist writers such as Joseph Conrad, Ezra Pound, D. H. Lawrence, and James Joyce [2]. In this sense, he contributed both theoretically and practically to the intellectual foundations of modernism. Ford's most celebrated works – The Good Soldier (1915) and the Parade's End tetralogy (1924–1928) – embody the moral, political, and

social crises that the First World War produced in English society [3]. In The Good Soldier, the collapse of personal relationships, the disintegration of family and friendship, and the erosion of loyalty serve as symbolic reflections of the uncertainty that dominated national identity in the early twentieth century. The non-linear structure of the narrative and the use of the unreliable narrator are among Ford's most significant contributions to modernist aesthetics [4]. On the other hand, Parade's End provides a broader panorama of pre- and post-war England. Its central character, Christopher Tietjens, represents the "last Victorian," embodying traditional values that gradually erode under the impact of war, social change, and modernity [5]. Through this figure, Ford links individual

fate to national character, showing that Englishness was not only shaped on the battlefield but also within the framework of everyday domestic and social life. Thus, Ford's novels can be studied at the intersection of modernist techniques – fragmented time, memory as a structuring device, and polyphonic narration [6] – and the discourse of national identity. This duality makes him not only an innovative stylist of modernist prose but also a writer who offered an original perspective on the theoretical and literary discussion of national identity [7].

1. *The Good Soldier and the Moral Crisis*: Published in 1915, *The Good Soldier* has often been described as “the saddest story ever told,” a phrase Ford himself suggested as an alternative title. On the surface, it recounts a tale of betrayal, adultery, and failed friendship, but beneath its plot lies a critique of the moral and cultural decay of Edwardian society. Its narrator, John Dowell, is one of the most famous unreliable narrators in modernist literature [1]. His hesitant voice, circular storytelling, and constant self-contradictions immerse readers in a world where truth and certainty are perpetually deferred. Dowell's inability to fully grasp his own experiences mirrors the inability of Edwardian society to articulate a coherent moral vision. His discovery of his wife's infidelity and his reflections on the Ashburnhams' tragic marriage form a microcosm of the wider moral crisis. Betrayal in the novel is not only a personal failure but also a cultural symptom, pointing to the collapse of the ideals of honor, fidelity, and respectability that had defined Victorian identity [2]. The fragmented structure of the novel, with its non-linear chronology and repeated retellings of events, embodies the instability of modern consciousness. By deliberately disorienting the reader, Ford dramatizes the sense of uncertainty that pervaded pre-war England. In fact, the novel's structure itself becomes a metaphor for national identity in crisis: disjointed, incoherent, and perpetually under revision. Scholars have often compared *The Good Soldier* to works by Henry James for its psychological depth, but Ford departs from James by emphasizing the collapse rather than the refinement

of social structures. The failure of intimate relationships in the novel reflects the failure of national ideals; Dowell's broken world is England's broken world. In this sense, *The Good Soldier* is not just a domestic tragedy but a symbolic critique of an entire civilization confronting the loss of moral certainty and the fragility of its national character [3].

2. *Parade's End* and “Late Victorian”

Values: Between 1924 and 1928, Ford published his monumental *Parade's End* tetralogy, consisting of *Some Do Not...*, *No More Parades*, *A Man Could Stand Up*, and *Last Post*. This sequence is considered one of the most ambitious literary responses to the First World War and Ford's crowning achievement [4]. While *The Good Soldier* narrows its focus to the collapse of personal lives, *Parade's End* expands its canvas to encompass war, politics, social upheaval, and the decline of an entire cultural order. The protagonist, Christopher Tietjens, is constructed as the “last Tory” or the “last Victorian,” a man who embodies integrity, stoicism, and intellectual rigor. He is portrayed as the custodian of old values, determined to uphold principles of honor and truth even as the world around him disintegrates [5]. Yet, his ideals are tested on multiple fronts: the devastation of trench warfare, the collapse of aristocratic power, and the rise of new gender dynamics in the figure of Valentine Wannop, a suffragette and his eventual partner. The disintegration of Tietjens's marriage to Sylvia reflects the collapse of the Victorian institution of family. Sylvia's cruelty and infidelity serve as symbolic counterpoints to Tietjens's steadfastness, dramatizing the conflict between tradition and modernity. The tetralogy as a whole critiques the hypocrisy and corruption of Edwardian society, while simultaneously valorizing endurance, sacrifice, and loyalty – values that Ford suggests are essential to national survival. In *Parade's End*, Ford also confronts the decline of the British Empire. Tietjens's struggles with his career, his family, and his reputation parallel the Empire's struggles to retain global dominance amidst unprecedented upheaval. His resistance to modern bureaucratic systems and his reliance

on personal honor highlight the inadequacy of Victorian values in an era defined by mechanized war and social transformation [6]. More than a war novel, *Parade's End* is an epic meditation on Englishness itself. It asks whether national identity can endure when the institutions that sustained it – family, aristocracy, empire – are under siege. Ford's answer is ambivalent: while Tietjens survives with his principles intact, his world is irrevocably changed, suggesting that national identity, like personal identity, is never static but constantly reshaped by history.

3. *National Identity and the Modernist*

Style: Ford's contribution to modernism lies not only in his themes but in his radical narrative techniques. His novels demonstrate that modernism was both an aesthetic revolution and a cultural interrogation of national myths. The hallmark of his style – unreliable narration, fragmented chronology, psychological introspection, and polyphony – serves as a critique of the idea that nations, like narratives, can ever be stable or unified [7]. In *The Good Soldier*, the collapse of truth parallels the collapse of moral certainties. John Dowell's unreliable voice echoes a culture where loyalty, faith, and stability were breaking down. By refusing to present a coherent version of events, Ford dramatizes the impossibility of sustaining a coherent narrative of national identity. In *Parade's End*, the scale expands to include the historical and social panorama of England in wartime. Here, Ford deploys shifting perspectives, internal monologues, and memory sequences to reveal how individuals construct their own versions of reality. These techniques underscore the subjectivity of history itself: just as memory reshapes personal identity, collective memory reshapes national identity [8]. Ford thus redefines Englishness not as an eternal essence but as an unstable construct – contested, fragmented, and continually renegotiated. His fiction highlights the tension between continuity and rupture, tradition and change, individual experience and collective destiny. By showing how narratives themselves fracture under pressure, Ford reveals that nations, like texts, are always in the

process of being rewritten. This insight places Ford among the foremost modernist innovators. His novels not only transformed the technical possibilities of prose but also illuminated the fragility of cultural myths. Englishness, in his work, emerges as a dynamic process rather than a static reality, a discourse shaped by the very crises that threatened to destroy it.

Conclusion

Ford Madox Ford's literary achievement vividly illustrates the profound crisis of English national identity in the early twentieth century, a period marked by the upheavals of war, the decline of Victorian ideals, and the emergence of modernist aesthetics. His novels reveal that questions of loyalty, morality, and cultural belonging were not abstract issues but deeply embedded in the lived experiences of individuals navigating a world of uncertainty and transition. In *The Good Soldier*, Ford exposes how private tragedies – betrayal, loss of trust, and emotional disintegration – mirror a broader cultural and moral collapse within English society. Through the device of the unreliable narrator and the novel's fragmented structure, he demonstrates how instability at the personal level reflects instability at the national level. In this way, the novel becomes a subtle but powerful commentary on the fragility of national identity in the years leading up to the First World War. *The Parade's End* tetralogy, on the other hand, provides an epic vision of England undergoing seismic changes. Through the character of Christopher Tietjens, Ford dramatizes the tension between the enduring myth of Englishness, grounded in Victorian values of honor and duty, and the disruptive forces of war, modernity, and social transformation. Tietjens embodies both the persistence of tradition and the inevitability of change, and his struggles highlight the extent to which national identity is continually contested and redefined. Ford's modernist narrative strategies – unreliable narration, psychological introspection, polyphonic perspectives, and temporal fragmentation – are not merely stylistic innovations but serve as tools to interrogate the cultural myths of Englishness. By

embedding the theme of national identity within experimental forms, Ford expanded the scope of the modernist novel, linking aesthetic innovation with social and historical critique. In this respect, Ford Madox Ford stands as more than a stylist of modernist prose: he emerges as a writer who offered a distinct and original theoretical perspective on the problem of national identity. His works bridge the gap between private experience and collective history, demonstrating that the English nation, like the modernist text itself, is fragmented, contested, and perpetually in the process of reconstruction.

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FORD MADOX FORD-UN "THE GOOD SOLDIER" VƏ "PARADE'S END" ƏSƏRLƏRİNDƏ MİLLİ İDENTİFİKASIYA VƏ ƏXLAQ BÖHRANİ

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Ford Madox Ford (1873–1939) modernist ədəbiyyatın mühüm nümayəndələrindən biri hesab olunur. Onun roman yaradıcılığı yalnız estetik təcrübələr deyil, həm də İngiltərənin milli kimlik və dəyərlər sisteminə dair dərin müşahidələrlə zəngindir. Xüsusilə *The Good Soldier* (1915) və *Parade's End* (1924–1928) əsərləri Birinci Dünya müharibəsi dövründə İngilis cəmiyyətində baş verən siyasi, sosial və mədəni böhranların ədəbi ifadəsi kimi təqdim olunur. "The Good Soldier" əsərində müəllif etibarsız nəqlçi texnikasından istifadə edərək fərdi münasibətlərin sarsıntısını təsvir edir; ailə, dostluq və sədaqət kimi dəyərlərin çöküşü bütövlükdə milli kimlik böhranının bir parçasına çevrilir. Romanın parçalanmış süjet strukturu həm fərdi, həm də ictimai böhranı əks etdirir və oxucunu milli identifikasiyanın mürəkkəbliyini dərk etməyə yönəldir. "Parade's End" tetralogiyası isə daha geniş miqyasda tarixi və ictimai panoram təqdim edir. Əsas qəhrəman Kristofer Tietjens "son viktorian" dəyərlərin simvolu kimi göstərilir, lakin müharibə, modern dünyaya keçid və sosial strukturun dəyişməsi onun şəxsiyyətini və ideallarını ciddi sınağa çəkir. Bu silsilə əsərdə Ford həm cəmiyyətin institusional böhranını, həm də fərdi kimliyin müasirliklə üz-üzə qalmasını təsvir edir. Məqalədə Fordun milli identifikasiya konsepsiyası modernist üslubun imkanları ilə təhlil edilir. Müəllifin parçalanmış zaman anlayışı, yaddaşın narrativdə əsas vasitə kimi işlədilməsi və çoxsəslilik prinsipi İngilis milli kimliyinin təmsil olunmasında yeni üfqlər açır. Ford Madox Ford beləliklə, təkcə modernist roman texnikasının yaradıcısı kimi deyil, həm də milli identifikasiya məsələlərinə orijinal baxış gətirən yazıçı kimi dəyərləndirilir.

Açar sözlər: modernist, milli identifikasiya, Birinci Dünya müharibəsi, viktorian dəyərlər, ingilis ədəbiyyatı

НАЦИОНАЛЬНАЯ ИДЕНТИЧНОСТЬ И МОРАЛЬНЫЙ КРИЗИС В РОМАНАХ ФОРДА МЭДОКСА ФОРДА «ХОРОШИЙ СОЛДАТ» И «КОНЕЦ ПАРАДА»

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Форд Мадокс Форд (1873–1939) считается одним из выдающихся представителей модернистской литературы. Его романное творчество не ограничивается только эстетическими экспериментами, но также обогащено глубокими наблюдениями за системой национальной идентичности и ценностей в Англии. В особенности романы *The Good Soldier* (1915) и цикл *Parade's End* (1924–1928) представлены как литературное выражение политических, социальных и нравственных кризисов, происходивших в английском обществе в годы Первой мировой войны. В *The Good Soldier* автор использует технику ненадёжного рассказчика для изображения разрушения личных отношений; крушение таких ценностей, как семья, дружба и верность, становится частью более широкого кризиса национальной идентичности. Фрагментарная структура повествования отражает как индивидуальный, так и социальный распад, побуждая читателя осознать сложность процесса национальной идентификации. Тетралогия *Parade's End* предлагает более широкий исторический и социальный панорамный взгляд. Её главный герой Кристофер Титдженс представлен как символ «поздневикторианских» ценностей, однако война, переход к современности и трансформация общественных структур подвергают его личность и идеалы суровым испытаниям. В этом цикле Форд изображает не только институциональный кризис общества, но и противостояние индивидуальной идентичности с современным миром. В статье концепция национальной идентификации Форда рассматривается через призму модернистской эстетики. Его понимание фрагментированного времени, использование памяти как центрального повествовательного средства и принцип полифонии открывают новые горизонты в репрезентации английской национальной идентичности. Таким образом, Форд Мадокс Форд оценивается не только как создатель модернистских повествовательных техник, но и как писатель, предложивший оригинальный взгляд на проблемы национальной идентичности.

Ключевые слова: модернизм, национальная идентичность, Первая мировая война, викторианские ценности, английская литература